

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM NBC White Paper: Part II

STATION WRC TV
NBC Network

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CITY Washington, DC

FULL TEXT

OFFICIAL: It was either a question of pulling out of Vietnam at that time or of having the Diem regime shape up, or facing the possibility of some other regime coming in.

OFFICIAL: My instructions with my meeting with General Duong Van Minh in October of 1963 from Ambassador Lodge were that I was to inform General Minh that the United States government would not thwart their coup.

REPORTER: This is the second of two programs examining how in the years of John F. Kennedy's presidency we slipped deeper into a war in Asia against Asians, a war that our most respected military commanders had always warned us against. By the summer of 1963 we had committed ourselves more deeply than Kennedy had intended to winning the war in Vietnam.

We did not ask what kind of a government we were supporting. We did not ask whether we should be there. We were there, and we assumed it was right that we should be there. The question was, what would we do; how far would we go to win the war?

In the summer of 1963, the focus of our attention was the faltering government of Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem was losing the war. What were we going to do about it?

OFFICIAL: General Duong promised me that he would turn over the plans for the coup, that I could give this personally to Ambassador Lodge. I so informed Ambassador Lodge that this was the agreement.

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REPORTER: Between June and October, 1963 seven Buddhist monks burned themselves to death as a protest against the government of Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem has lost the support of his people. To continue to hold power, he has to use more and more force.